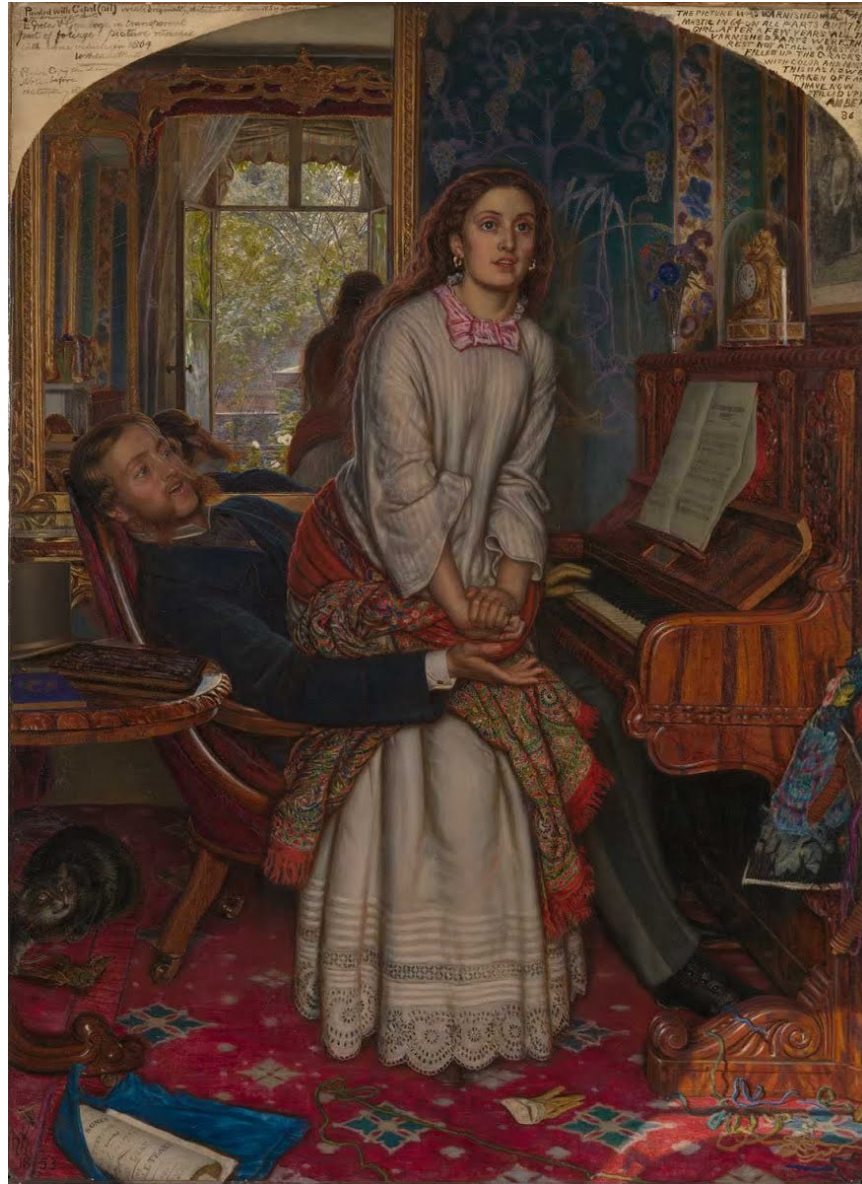


The Awakening Conscience
AKA Striver to Skiver
AKA Professional to Poverty
By Alex Brew 2014



The Awakening Conscience by William Holt

Get on board you beastly selfish Striver!

More and more, Strivers don't have it much better than people on benefits. They too can get towards the end of their lives and find that they can barely afford a one bed flat in London. Those working in low paid jobs can't even afford to rent a flat in London without housing benefit. This means that they are economically controlled as they can never take home more than around £70 per week. Strivers and 'hard working families' need to recognise that they need to change to protect themselves as well as us. This isn't about charity or ethics, this is about protecting the value of your own life!

I appeal to all Strivers to give up this pursuit of "freedom" through land-owning and salaries and look for it in new, innovative ways. 'Gangs' of ex-Strivers together refuse the sorts of lives they are being offered, refuse the erosion of our human rights, spend more time with family, more time protesting, become whistleblowers, growers, refuse to pay our taxes, our rents, our debts! So come on and join the big Skivers happy ole family.

Thanks: I've learnt a lot from working at Crossroads Women's Centre in Kentish Town. Thanks also to Hanna Demel for reading the drafts and ongoing support and to Lisa Fannen.

decision made must consider the impact on children] - future generations should not be burdened with unsustainable debt. We're tackling the debt that'll hang around the necks of the current children in the future."

[One of the three judges contested and even laughed at the idea that the concept of the right of the child was being interpreted as the right of that child not to be burdened with debt as an adult taxpayer. Nonetheless those same judges came down on the side of the government and rejected the appeal which had been brought by families affected by the benefit cap.]

I was shocked at the cynical arguments that the government made while knowingly forcing huge numbers of women and children into destitution —all for their own good apparently! Those families affected by the benefit cap are the larger families—already doing the massive work of caring for three or more children. But thanks to the human rights enhancing benefit cap they will no longer be able to afford to eat or heat their homes. Don't worry— it's all for a good cause—the government suggested that this would help people out of poverty, break their dependency and lower rents all in one magical move!

Important notice to readers

Some Strivers may see this text as an attack upon themselves. But they should consider that I was in their number for many years. I started my adult life as a professional PR working with the mainstream media promoting medical research and technology amongst other things.

This text is not meant to be a portrait of every Striver. Perhaps there are Strivers out there who do not think in the beastly way I set out to describe here. But, some may recognise themselves and I hope that if they do they might miraculously face themselves and find the path to re-join humanity.

This is urgent because the Striver mentality (which this Tory government named but did not create and which can be found among many left-wingers and 'radicals' too) is preventing us from seeing how all our human rights, freedoms and living standards are being eroded – whether we are Strivers or Skivers.

The Life of a Striver

- Strivers have taken on the state's wish for them to value money more than life. Strivers are shunted into their free-time which is bite sized, manageable and contains no threat to the establishment of anything resembling true freedom. Time does not stretch out to allow in any blossoming of self, creation or life. Instead it is carefully demarcated and organised. Their time is catered for to ensure that they never get time to stop and think and wonder what on earth they are so damn busy doing.
- Strivers have no time for life (are they scared of it?) and because they don't value it (or are scared of it), they see no reason why others shouldn't give it up – leaving children, plants, pets, lovers, friends and family to make a buck or two.
- Strivers are hard-working. They value work over everything else. It gives them a sense of dignity and purpose. They never stop to consider whether that work is useful or destructive to the wider society. A job is a job is a job. And if you have one – a well paid one - you must be alright.

Quotes from government lawyers - the Benefit Cap legal challenge (appeal) —Royal Courts of Justice, 29th January 2014

"We accept the effect is discrimination but it is not deliberate. The Secretary of State accepted that the measures that would be passed would have a disproportionate effect on women but that is because there are more women who are lone parents than men. The impact was plainly justified."

"There's nothing to say that lone female parents shouldn't be encouraged to work to break dependency." "Lone women with children under two could have been excluded but it impacts on the incentive. If you exclude these things you render parliament's will ineffective." "It's rare for the courts to protect these groups. It is almost never done."

"Lone parents also need to be incentivised to work –not the severely disabled, that's a different case."

"Breaking that dependency and encouraging people to work is human rights enhancing."

"Regarding fairness - the Treasury Spending Review of October 2010 – in it we have a broad concept of fairness. The

After Hopkins said this there was an intervention from the presenter saying it is true that people from eastern European countries are willing to take these jobs - the Brits are just too lazy. What he chooses not to understand is that a Pole can work here in horrendous conditions for 5 years living with 3 to 10 people sharing one small room and he or she can do this knowing that after having made that temporary sacrifice he/she will be able to go back to Poland and be able to afford to build a place of his own with the money he/she has made. He or she will be able to live the rest of their days in some semblance of normality with a permanent stable roof over their heads. For a Brit though, those wages will never get you a decent roof over your head (bought or rented) no matter how long or how hard you work. The Brit will be living in these precarious, over-crowded situations for decades on end knowing that— this is your life!

- Strivers have no home. They move into ready-made flats because they are “busy”. Making a home gets in the way of money-making, the constant accumulation of wealth and products and sometimes knowledge which is largely gained to impress (or to avoid life?). Deep down they feel they have no right to a home because they have swallowed the leaders’ line that they must earn the right even to inadequate housing.
- The Striver must always act the part. Without the part they forget who they are.

Common Striver Misconceptions

- Strivers think that mass unemployment, the use of Food Banks and so on is just because those people didn't try hard enough at school, or didn't try hard enough to get a job, or don't know how to manage their money. They think poor people should learn how to save and plan for the future without realizing that not having enough money means not having enough money - i.e. no spare. When the government asks for another £3 a week for council tax they should just contribute and stop complaining and protesting. They don't realise that taking another £3 actually means that the government is using a backdoor method to reduce the already measly amounts 'Skivers' get to live on. Recently children have been caught stealing bread for their families. Some mothers turn to prostitution or skip meals to feed their children.
- Strivers think that if you have been to prison you have probably done something very wrong and unethical – they think this while they:
- Make a buck out of the “criminal justice” industry.
- Do unethical work in pharma, oil and other destructive industries.

Katie Hopkins—what to say?

I sat next to a woman who challenged Katie Hopkins on the Channel 5 debate 'The Big Benefits Row'. Hopkins was trying to convince people they should take any badly paid job and when challenged by this woman indignantly said “do you think you're too good to clean a toilet?” Is it below us to clean Katie's toilet? Nobody seemed to know what to say. Least of all me. In time though it came to me how to respond to the injustice of that phrase. Hopkins—you want us to have no or little recourse to benefits so that you can pay us even less to clean your toilets. Today the paltry wages you offer leave us in even more squalid conditions than being on benefits! Tomorrow, you want us in a situation where we have no choice but to swim in your shit and thank the heavens for it! You want benefits to be so low that even your measly wages are better. Not only do you want us to clean your toilets for tiny sums but you want us to think that we're only good for that. You want us to believe that we're not good enough to be paid a wage that allows us to do anything other than clean your toilets day in and day out.

- Strivers took out such big loans to get an education that they see no problem with other people getting into debt –especially the poor. When they hear the phrases indentured labour or debt slavery they think it's a joke.
- Strivers think that because they can't think of life without work everyone should be happy to work into their seventies and beyond. They think that a grandmother should still be cleaning their toilets and kitchens and offices. They think of work as fulfilment. Money has become secondary to them because they have it. They don't care that without pensions millions of people will have to work all hours in jobs they hate until they die. This is a massive attack on all our right not to work.
- Pay minimum wages or less to house keepers, nannies, cleaners etc. who then can't survive without either turning tricks, dealing drugs, committing fraud or stealing nappies to top up their meagre incomes.
- Own a second flat or more that they rent out for astronomical rates. They accept the estate agents' sales pitch which tells the Striver that they must keep on increasing rents (and if they don't they're a pushover and being exploited by those nasty, greedy people who can't afford their own houses or rents).
- Strivers think that we live in a free society because they never come in contact with the levels of police state oppression that people living in poverty come in contact with. They believe the police when they say they just want to make the streets safer and get drugs and guns off the street. They believe that is why the police shoot people like Mark Duggan. They believe mass surveillance keeps us safe. They believe it when the police say if you're innocent you have nothing to fear. (The police don't collect CCTV evidence in the majority of cases – this leads 'Skivers' to think that it was not introduced for our safety but for their control.)

- Strivers hear free market and think freedom! For them those two words are interchangeable. They are yet to work out that the free market is responsible for present day slavery including Workfare, more black men and women in prison in the U.S. now, than there were black slaves in the time Strivers think of as slavery times. Many people in the UK now are working full-time and can say little more than they have housing and basic subsistence. Even the slave owners provided “their” slaves with basics for survival.
- Strivers think it’s a dog eat dog society and that people begging are exploiting them. They forget that they’re the ones getting loaded. When they do give it is done conspicuously, awkwardly and with disdain all in one lavish movement of the hand. They do it without any concept of just how much they take.
- Strivers think that because they are willing to accept a life running and stressed, that the poor should be doubly willing and are therefore Shirkers and Slackers if they refuse it.
- If you’re not striving Strivers think you’re mentally unwell or morally deficient. And yet if you’ve no love or community in your life they will excuse it: “well, you’re busy”!
- The right to a family life is frowned upon unless you have the money for it – and fewer and fewer people do because the wages for anyone other than professionals are so dire and the rents are so high.
- Strivers think children are a luxury! Since when did life become a luxury? Strivers gave up children to sit in lifeless offices feeling guilty, desperate, depressed, anxious and possibly suicidal. They think that because they have done it poor people should definitely have to do it. They believe that anyone not doing it has dependency issues – using the state or the partner as a ‘cash cow’!
- Strivers think that if only everyone was as productive as they are, there would be no poverty, no pension crisis, no housing crisis etc. They think that if everyone behaved like them the world would be a better place. What they often have not realised is that we are already hugely more productive than we have ever been as a nation due in part to technology. The top 1000 people have increased their wealth by £155,000,000,000 in the last few years during austerity. House prices are soaring. Workers don’t need to increase productivity further in order to demand a living wage. With these types of profits we should be paid not just a living wage but a comfortable wage – a really damn comfortable wage!

- Those who have bought a house reminisce about those wonderful itinerant days when they were forced out of their homes every 6 months to a year by unscrupulous landlords. The fact that they lived like that for two to five years stops them feeling guilty when they move people on so they can get a higher rental price next time. They never think that for most of us we never get to end up in the cosy house and reminisce about wild times but have to keep moving year on year out into our sixties and seventies!
- Striver people read in the Metro, Times or Guardian that we are being surveilled en masse and think that is an interesting article and oh well, I'm doing nothing wrong, this won't affect me. It is a very rare breed of Striver who will actually stand up either for themselves and their own rights (except when it comes to negotiating their salaries) or other people's rights. Strivers think that if the authorities are doing it, then it must be necessary. They think if someone is attempting to protect their right not to be surveilled, their basic human right to a private life, they must be criminals or people with far too much time on their hands. The right to a private life has been eroded by their acceptance of the ethic of constant work - let alone GCHQ.
- Strivers never admit that their jobs are full of shirking. They sit all day, typing and surfing facebook and snorting cocaine in the toilets. They are too busy achieving (WHAT?) to stop and take some care.
- Strivers are so keen on consumer goods that they think that anyone who isn't carrying a take-out Latte (McDonald's and Gregg's not included) or a bag showing you've just made a luxury purchase, is dangerous. They look with suspicion and may try to have you arrested if you approach them or get too close to their property. If you look like you haven't bought anything in years you're probably mad and dirty too.

The Riots!

When Strivers saw or heard of the riots (usually on the telly or from a great distance), they said “I don’t believe in people smashing up our property, smashing up our communities”. They were outraged that all the shop fronts (mostly multinationals) had been damaged and that people (mostly those living in poverty for years and decades and lifetimes) had stolen these precious over-priced goods! They talked of “ill gotten goods”! They asked for peace! In Peckham a peace wall was erected! They got out their brooms as though this was wartime and the community had to pull together. These are people who had only ever pulled together in their communities to drink lattes before. They were at their most outraged and indignant. For once they dropped their irony. They seemed to forget (or to find it distasteful?) to mention that the uprising was caused by the police killing yet another human being living in poverty – Mark Duggan, a black man, whose father was black and whose mother is white. A man whose mother and aunt are still fighting through the courts and at protests to get some sort of belated justice. When Mark Duggan’s father died of cancer (likely brought on by the grief of losing his son) where was their anger and community fucking spirit? Thousands of people have died in police custody or due to these harsh government cuts which have led to a massive increase in food and fuel poverty. The idea that the riots and those attacks on property were the greatest violence, the greatest threat to our society, massively damages all of us.

How Striver mentality damages us

Strivers have already given up so many of their human rights to get a piece of the cake that they don’t see why we all shouldn’t. Here are some examples.

- Strivers think it is fine for people to give up their communities because –if they ever had one –they likely gave it up in order to get an education at a good university far from home (as I did). They gave it up finally when they started full-time work where they pretend to find community in order to fulfil their career and financial ambitions. They have only superficial reunions with their parents and siblings which they must pencil in months in advance due to their busy schedules. They complain about their busy schedules but the idea of going part-time fills them with panic. Perhaps they would feel worthless or perhaps they would realise how little they are able to enjoy life.
- Strivers have moved house so often in private rentals and then on the property ladder, that they see no problem with moving house. They see the government’s attempts to force people on benefits out of London as completely normal and sane. Since they can’t afford to live where they want either they’d rather we were all in insecure, over-priced private rentals. They never for a moment think to fight that battle against the government with us.